



JAMES A. NOYES, Director

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

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IN REPLY PLEASE

REFER TO FILE: WM-9

July 8, 2003

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: James A. Noyes
Director of Public Works

SUSPENSION OF RECREATIONAL BENEFICIAL USE OF ENGINEERED FLOOD CONTROL CHANNELS DURING UNSAFE WET-WEATHER CONDITIONS

On July 10, 2003, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board will consider a recommendation by its staff to suspend water quality standards for bacteria during high-flow storm events in engineered flood control channels. Bacteria standards currently in effect for storm drain channels are meant to protect the health of those in direct contact with the water, regardless of storm or dry-weather conditions.

Flood control channels are extremely hazardous during storms. Therefore, it has been the County's policy to lock all access gates at the prediction of rain. The Regional Board staff appropriately recognizes that the use of flood control channels during storm events is not safe, that the recreational use of channels during storms is not attainable, and that restoration of the channels to original conditions is presently infeasible. They have drafted a recommendation to suspend bacteria standards when rainfall reaches at least 1/2-inch. The 1/2-inch rainfall amount corresponds to the "Level 1 Alert" threshold used by swift water rescue agencies.

We believe that suspending the water quality standards in engineered channels during unsafe wet-weather conditions makes sense and that it substantiates the County's assertion that flood control channels are dangerous places. The recommended changes will allow for better use of County resources. Therefore, we plan to speak in support of the Regional Board's staff recommendation to suspend bacteria water quality standards during unsafe wet-weather conditions.

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If you have any questions, please call me or your staff may contact Don Wolfe at (626) 458-4014.

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Attach.

cc: Chief Administrative Office
Executive Office